



*Many Voices Working for the Community*

## **Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board**

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Contaminated Areas of Oak Ridge Reservation to be Redefined**

Currently, the entire U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR), about 34,000 acres, is designated on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Priorities List (NPL) as an area that requires cleanup of radioactive and other hazardous waste. That NPL classification should begin to change this fall and will be finalized in about a year.

DOE's Environmental Management (EM) program has agreed to a recommendation from its citizen advisory board to work toward redefining the Oak Ridge NPL site boundary to include only those areas that are known to be contaminated. The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) approved the recommendation, generated by its Stewardship committee, at its June meeting.

In 1989, all 34,000 acres of the ORR were placed on the NPL, identifying that it was to be cleaned up under the provisions of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as the Superfund. However, only about 20 percent of the reservation has contamination from work conducted since the 1940s.

Even though all of the ORR is labeled on the NPL, EPA policy specifies that while a site may be described in terms of geographical boundaries or property markings, for the purpose of an NPL listing only those areas that are contaminated are considered part of the NPL site. In 1995, this policy was re-stated – "NPL sites include only contaminated areas. Clean portions are not included even if the site name implies that the entire facility is "listed" and "sites are not based upon property boundaries, but rather the areas of contamination." For this reason, even though all of the reservation will no longer be identified as part of the NPL, the delineated Oak Ridge NPL site will now also reflect waters contaminated from federal work conducted on the reservation.

In 2009 a white paper was drafted describing the process DOE will use, supported by the Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU), to document areas of the reservation that are identified as clean and excluded from the NPL. This process has been provided to EPA and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation as a modification to the Federal Facility Agreement (FFA) to seek their concurrence.

The modification proposal and white paper has been presented and discussed among the FFA project managers, but no action has been taken to document this process and allow for the NPL site map to be modified.

ORSSAB's Stewardship Committee studied the white paper and concluded that based upon the positive results this process would have on the community DOE should move forward with the process. The committee drafted the recommendation, which was approved by the full board.

ORSSAB recommended that the FFA parties should follow EPA guidelines and take steps outlined in the 2009 white paper to redraw the NPL boundaries to include only the contaminated areas of the reservation. The board believes reducing the NPL area would be beneficial in presenting a more positive image about contamination within the reservation and the assurance that DOE is directing its cleanup resources to the areas with known contamination.

In responding to the recommendation, Dave Adler, DOE's FFA Project Manager, said, "I agree that successful completion of this effort will help reduce invalid perceptions of the magnitude of contamination present on the reservation. Consistent with your recommendation, the Department has initiated activities to delineate areas of the reservation that have no history of industrial activity or evidence of contaminated environmental media."

Adler stated that even though action on the modification request has not been taken, the project has been initiated and is being coordinated with the state of Tennessee and EPA staff. The work and resulting documents being performed by ORAU should be completed by September 2012. Results of the change will be made available to the public in a geographic information system map this fall. Such a map will 'facilitate future land use planning and environmental activities' on the reservation.

ORSSAB is a panel of volunteers chartered by the federal government to provide advice and recommendations to DOE on its cleanup operations on the Oak Ridge Reservation. The board meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the DOE Information Center, 475 Oak Ridge Turnpike. More information about the board is available at [www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab](http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab).

All board and committee meetings are open to the public.

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